

**Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription**

Tape:

**Subject: Theodore Laliotis
Interviewer: Athena Arvantidis
Date of Interview: 5/7/2004**

**Transcriber: Amanda Cookson
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**I: Interviewer
T: Theodore**

Counter: 000

I: //K//

T: //One {000}

I: Uhh good afternoon. Today is Friday, May 7th. My name is Athena Arvantidis and I would like to welcome Mr. Ted, Theodore uhh Laliotis, who has kindly agreed to be an interviewee for the Oral History Project. Uhh this was established at the Center for Modern Greek Studies and umm it an archive at the Center. Mr. Laliotis would like to tell us uhh. Mr. Laliotis, would you like to tell us when and where you were born?

T: Sure. Uhh first of all you gave the date today mmm as uhh May 7th. It's year is 2004.

I: Oh I forgot that part, didn't I?

T: <laughing> Right.

I: Ok.

T: That's ok.

I: <laughing>

T: It's May 7th, 2004. Uhh and uhh I was so in answer to your question, I was born in Epidoros {008} Greece. Uhh to be a little more specific Epidoros is the general name

of the area. I was actually born in a uhh uhh what I would say, primitive house uhh at the side of a mountain which was the neighborhood of the Laliotis family, seven homes. It was at the side of a mountain because my grandfather had uhh was a shepherd, had sheep and goats and uhh that was the year the Laliotis uhh {014} and the actual the village of Epidoros was about uhh five miles away from those, from those homes. So administratively it's called Epidoros but physically it was a small, primitive house, one of seven houses that constitute the Laliotaita, as they call them, which is my uncle's and uhh other relatives that came from our great-grandfather.

I: Well that sounds very, very interesting. That's a interesting part of Greece. Umm you are, how many uhh brothers and sisters do you have?

T: I have two brothers, older than I//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: Uhh one is a, of course, they're both retired now, as, as a, as am I. But my older brother a schoolteacher uhh for many, many years, very active uhh in the community, served in various parts of Greece. Uhh uhh as well as uhh in Athens in, but the last uhh 10, 15 years of his tenure was in Epidoros, was the schoolmaster of Epidoros. The middle brother uhh Yiorgos uhh was a mathematician uhh by education but uhh meteorologist by training and worked at the uhh Athens airport at the Meteorology department. Uhh and he uhh retired about five, six years ago.

I: That's great, that's wonderful. Uhh Mr. Laliotis, can you relate to us uhh in your experiences in your early childhood or childhood that you remember uhh there was quite a difficult, that part of uhh Greece, growing up during the World War II as well as the Civil War. Do you have any//

T: //Indeed it was very difficult, I was born in 1939 so it during my early childhood I, I still remember many aspects of the uhh, of the war. Uhh I remember that when, when we knew that the uhh uhh the Germans or the Italians, whoever and they all came and went uhh when you knew they were coming, we had to leave the house. And I'm talkin' about that primitive house on the side of the mountain and go down to the valley in the middle of the fields and sleep overnight in the uhh, in the fields, the {039} just so that we would be safe from, you know, from intruders that may come to uhh uhh to uhh uhh <sighs> not to burglarize but what do we call it to uhh//

I: //take over?//

T: //to loot.

I: To loot.

T: To loot, yeah, to, to loot the uhh, the homes for lookin' for chicken and other foods and things like that. So I remember clearly having to run down to the middle of the

valley and sleep with our, uhh with our sleeping uhh gear and everything overnight just to be safe.

I: Wow that sounds very scary.

T: Right.

I: Umm what about when you got older, the Civil War, was there, was there any experiences that you had specifically because it was a really terrible time in Greece, uhh for that. And Epidoros is in Peloponessus//

T: //Right. Uhh I, the only, the only uhh thing that actually uhh as the years went by that was kind of uhh left over was that uhh we have a what we call "turncoat" or a {049} as we call it in, in, in Greek. Uhh who was a relative, a distant relative but he had become, during the war, during the Italians and the Germans uhh, he had become a uhh a turncoat and would actually uhh, would actually lead the Germans and the Italians to the families, to various places. So he was like the uhh and, and, and of course, after the uhh, after the war, after the Italians and the Germans left, this guy was still around. So it was a very sad reminder of what had uhh happened and I mean, he was, he was, he was around, he was part of the uhh, the village. Uhh so you, we would see him day in and day out and it was a very ugly reminder of what had transpired, how bad, how ugly the uhh the war situation was.

I: Umm you finished high school where?

T: Uhh let's go back, let's go back before high school.

I: Ok.

T: To go to grade school, actually. As I described, I was born on the side of the mountain. Uhh we actually had to walk every day, the four miles that they mentioned//

I: //<laughing>//

T: //that is, that is that was our house from the uhh village where, where the grade school was.

I: Right.

T: So me and my cousins we had to walk, whether it was winter, whether it was cold. Uhh and lots of times we would uhh, we would be late, we would be cold. Uhh I, I won't say, you know, we, we didn't have shoes, we did have shoes, but they were primitive shoes so a lot of times because of the bad weather we would be late in getting to school uhh in the morning. And we would uhh have consequences by the teacher for being late. Uhh but it was a, it was a clearly an effort uhh to actually go to gradeschool. Uhh traveling four miles each way every day. Uhh.

I: Four kilometers or four miles?

T: Uhh actually you're right, five, five kilometers, which is about three and a half uhh//

I: //yeah, that's still//

T: //<mumbling> three and a half miles//

I: //a distance//

T: //yeah, quite, quite a distance right. Uhh I finished uhh grade school and uhh in the meantime my two brothers had already finished and were going to do high school. My father, this is a very interesting point, my father had a philosophy that uhh wanted all three of us to get educated. I mean he was determined, he did not want us to become farmers cuz//

I: //shepherds//

T: //my, my father, yeah. Actually, after the war uhh my father uhh remained in a Epidoros and I'll, and I'll say, explain why I say that and he turned more into agriculture. Got rid, got rid of the uhh, of the goats and sheep and all of that and, and uhh was more in the agriculture. And uhh he was willing at any time to, to sell land uhh if he had to in order to make sure that all three of us got an education. But he had the resources, the money to send us to high school and on to upper education. And this was in contrast with most of my cousins, most of his cousins uhh I should say, most of his cousins who would take their children and actually put them to work at the farms. And the more children they have, they uhh, the better off they were because they had more hands to work the uhh the land and, and be more successful farmers. My father had the philosophy and the vision, I would say, uhh the vision to understand that it was important that, it was better for us to get an education and get away from the village, get away from, from farming. Now the transition from a, from a, shepherds to farming is an interesting, is an interesting story because it brings in the second, my second area of citizenship, if I call it that that, in Greece because uhh the roots of the family were from Arcadia, actually from the same village that {093} had his uhh his headquarters up in the mountains of Arcadia, a small village called {094}.

I: Mmhmm.

T: And uhh what my grandfather used to do in his family uhh they would uhh be down in the Epidoros uhh during the winter months. Uhh October through April approximately because it was too cold in, in the high mountains of uhh Tripolis or Arcadia. Uhh but then eh around April they would pick up everything, the whole, the whole household basically, donkeys and, and chicken, and uhh everything and just uhh

walk for about five days, uhh with the herds, with the sheep and the goats and everything, and walk for five days to reach uhh {101} up in, in Arcadia.

I: Mmhmm.

T: Where they would spend the uhh five months, five, six months of the summer in Arcadia. Why? Because//

I: //it's cold?//

T: //in the summertime it's cooler and there was a lot more grazing for the uhh//

I: //for the sheep//

T: //and the goats. Whereas when the winter started to come around October it would be too cold for the, for the, for the herds up there and they didn't have, they didn't have any, you know, enclosed facilities or anything to keep them warm. It snows a lot up there in, in Arcadia. So October they would take everything again, the whole household and walk another five days//

I: <laughing>

T: //to come back down to, to Epidoro. That was the life of the, of the, of the shepherd.

I: Wow.

T: Uhh and uhh but after the war, this is why I'm bringing this//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //this up. After the war my grandfather was getting very old and my father decided he's not gonna do that anymore, even though still our roots are in, in, in {111} in Arcadia, in Tripolis up there, are still there, we still have a home and some property and stuff like that. But my father stayed after the war in, in Epidoros became, and, and that's where I was uhh, I was, I was raised. Uhh actually they tell me that I made that trip, the five days of, of walking uhh one year, or twice//

I: //How//

T: //one, one time up and one, see I was born in '39//

I: //right, so when did you make that trip?

T: In the, that year, the uhh. See I was born in March//

I: //Yeah//

T: //and in April they left, I mean they did the walk to go, so I was in the back uhh of//

I: //your mama//

T: //my mother's, mom, my mama's uhh back in the {118} as they used to say. So I made that trip that uhh April and then in October made the trip down, but that was the last time.

I: Ok.

T: So they tell me that I, I, I made that trip in my mom, in my mom's backpack <laughing>

I: <laughing>

T: Once. Ok so, so uhh//

I: //So you finished//

T: //finished the grade school and uhh here's the village//

I: //near the village or in Epidoros//

T: //near, in Epidoros.

I; In Epidoros.

T: Yeah, in Epidoros, right. Uhh and uhh I had to do like my brothers did to actually leave the house. In order to go to high school I had to go to Nafplion.

I: Mmhmm.

T: Now I also I was fortunate or unfortunate whatever, I started a year earlier. My father, as I say, was a, was a, was very keen on education uhh so I finished grade school in eleven years old.

I: Wow//

T: //rather than twelve, which is the standard because I had started a year earlier//

I: //earlier//

T: //in, in grade school. So eleven years old, uhh, I had to uhh leave of course, we had to go the entrance examination for the, for the high school. Uhh cuz back then, you, you couldn't, you weren't, you couldn't go automatically from grade school to high school, you had to have//

I: //Wow//

T: //entrance examinations.

I: Really?//

T: //And if you're accepted, yeah, then you went to high school. So I did and I passed and uhh I started uhh, I had to leave the village uhh, I had to leave Epidoros and go to Nafplion, which is about oh uhh, what about uhh fifty kilometers uhh away from//

I: //Right//

T: //from Epidoros to go to high school. Now eleven years old, I had to rent a room, uhh//

I: //you were by yourself?

T: With some other kids//

I: //Oh I see//

T: //the first, the first year I was with some other kids from Epidoros//

I: //Uh huh//

T: //that, that they knew. Uhh but still, I mean, uhh renting, renting a room and waiting//

I: //on your own//

T: //on our, on my own every Saturday waiting for the uhh bus to bring me a big basket that my mother would prepare with uhh {140} and all kinds of other uhh//

I: //{141} who cooked for you//

T: //that you know, food. Who cooked for me? Well my mom would spend, who send uhh once a week a basket with, with some food. Uhh some, some of the basic uhh food and then once a day I would go to a restaurant where, where we had an account, where I had an account//

I: //I see//

T: //and eat once a day usually dinner or I mean, afternoon. But uhh that was, that was, that was perhaps uhh, that was perhaps a uhh not difficult, I wouldn't say difficult//

I: //{147}//

T: //but a characteristic, a characteristic of my generation at the time. That most of, all of us from the villages we had to leave our villages at a young age and go rent a room in the next uhh town, which was Nafplion to go to high school.

I: Wow.

T: Uhh then the following, the first year was with other kids uhh. The following two years uhh I was renting a room by myself actually.

I: Mmhmm.

T: Uhh//

I: //And you did that until the end of high school?

T: And I did that actually for, for two years uhh because the uhh the last three years of high school I left uhh from Nafplion and I continued the last three years of high school in Athens//

I: //Oh//

T: //because my middle brother was a student at the university uhh and uhh well it, it's//

I: //did you stay with him?//

T: //it's an interesting, it's an interesting story.

I: That's what we're here for!

T: //But <laughing>

I: <laughing>

T: But the reasons, the reasons by today's standards are probably, are bizarre but uhh my older brother, I was, I was, I was in high school in Nafplion and my older brother would come and visit every uhh every Saturday. Uhh one day he came in and he ran into uhh my music uhh teacher from the high school. So the music teacher, who was very strict, uhh old guy st-, you know, stops my uhh, my brother in the street, because they knew, they knew he had gone through that high school himself. So uhh he says, he says

to him, "Your brother is in trouble." So my brother, your little brother's in, my brother says, "What's uhh, what's the problem?" He says, "He hangs out with some other, some other kids and uhh they wait there in the afternoons and they come and wait outside the uhh music conservatory." This which was outside of the high school uhh and uhh when the girls come out of the music conservatory they go after the girls. <laughing> so, so, so he says, "I don't like that," he says, "that's not a good uhh group, that's not a good uhh a thing to, to be doing." And from that he could go into other, other things. So my brother, being also very conservative and being afraid that I might, you know, take the wrong uhh the wrong direction or start, start doing some bad things, comes in two Saturdays later and he says uhh, "Pick up your things, we're leaving." And I said, "Why are, why are we leaving?" He says uhh, "You're going to Athens." So I g-, they wanted to take me to Athens to be under the supervision of the older brother. I mean it's a bizarre story but it is true//

I: //<mumbling>//

T: //and it showed the thinking and it showed the thinking of the people back then. I mean not only the, the, the conservative thinking but also the concern. I mean they were//

I: //Yeah//

T: //they, it was, they were very concerned, they wanted to make sure that the, even though, I mean, that it was uhh, it was not, they were not valid reasons for me to, to have left uhh Nafplion but actually it was ok because uhh it was, it was helpful to me to have my middle brother also, you know, helping me with my work, with my homework, with other things. And for us to be together in, in Athens. So I finished high school in, in Athens.

I: Well it was, must have been an interesting transition between, from the village to Epidoros to Ath-, to Nafplio and then to Athens. So that was//

T: //Right//

I; //interesting. What, do you remember any impressions or first impressions, especially going to Athens uhh. Nafplio, of course, was a very beautiful city in those days, was it not? Uhh//

T: //It was, it was and uhh I, I can't say, I mean the, the transition was uhh, was fairly uhh, fairly uhh uhh normal. Uhh I mean the same thing happened in, in, in Athens, uhh I would go//

I: //what about Athens, yes//

T: //I would go, I would every Saturday uhh instead of a uhh basket with, with a bus uhh my, my, my mom would send a uhh bigger basket this time because there were two of a us with a, with a boat, με το {194} because we had directly, direct from Epidoros//

I: //right//

T: //to, to Piraea.

I: Uh huh.

T: So I would have to take, get on the uhh στον ηλεκτρικό//

I: //Mmhmm, mmhmm//

T: //as we used to say//

I: //mmhmm//

T: //the uhh, the metro, the old-fashioned metro//

I: //or tram//

T: //{196} No, actually it was the metro, the, the, the electric uhh//

I: //Oh, but it was on the ground, above ground//

T: //Uhh some, some above ground, some under. It was the only metro that existed for many years until, until recently between Athens and, and Piraeus.

I: Right.

T: So I would get on the, on the metro, go down to the uhh, to the port in Piraeus and pick up the big, the big basket and bring it home. <laughing>

I: <laughing>

T: So <laughing> not much, not much changed except the uhh, the scenery. And uhh being the youngest, another, another uhh, another characteristic was that being the youngest, again we would, we would eat one meal, both my brother and I in a nearby restaurant where we'd keep a running account. But a majority of the time uhh we had to, we would cook at home and we just had the one room and uhh we had a {206} a little, a little propane thing and being the younger of the two I had to do the cook-, cooking most of the time. So I used to cook macaronia <laughing>

I: <laughing>

T: Very easy to do, macaronia with some tomatoes and, and stuff or uhh {209}. My mother would send uhh {210} //

I: //greens//

T: //Yeah, greens, uhh from, from, from the village and I had to, I had to cook and boil them and, and so forth. So I was, I was, I had to prepare din, dinner or at least, some meal every day cuz I was the youngest.

I: Mmhmm. What was umm that sounds exciting for you as that youngest person //

T: //right//

I: //learning how to cook at that age//

T: //right.

I: What uhh, were there any things, any political happenings that you were aware of in Athens at the time?

T: No, I was never //

I: //Uhh//

T: //I was never, uhh either in involved in politics or uhh concerned or uhh generally I was, I was not politics savvy at the time. I was just a little boy from the, from the village trying to get an education basically.

I: So when did you, how did you decide to come to the United States to go to school, go to the university and not stay, let's say in Athens?

T: Yeah, after, after //

I: //your brothers were there, right?//

T: //Right, my brothers were there. After I finished high school in 1956 actually uhh of course, my father wanted me to follow my brothers' uhh steps and, and become a teacher. I mean it was a safe uhh safe occupation, and it was a prestigious occupation for, you know //

I: //Right//

T: //back, back in those uhh, those days. And it had the least uhh, you only had to go to {226} for two years. Uhh it was the least, uhh the shortest, you know //

I: //it's the teacher's academy//

T: // {227} the teacher's academy, right, become a, become a teacher. Uhh I actually didn't uhh, didn't want that uhh. What I wanted to do was I wanted to, to go to become an officer in the navy.

I: Ahh.

T: Uhh I mean I, I wanted the uhh, you know, to be a, I wanted the brass//

I: //Right//

T: //<laughing> I didn't want to be just a schoolteacher somewhere. Uhh and I tried for, I tried the first year but uhh unbeknownst to be uhh they cut me in the in doing the examinations because I had a little bit of {235}. I mean, uhh eyesight//

I: //They cut you because of that?

T: Right, of course, that was an excuse//

I: //Ohh//

T: //the real reason was that I didn't have any, any royalty//

I: //insider//

T: //ehh eff bll-, you know, blood in my family, in other words. Most of the, most of the kids that they would take uhh in {239}//

I: <interrupting>

T: {240} this is the one {240}//

I: <interrupting>

T: //is where I was, I was for the navy. Uhh you have to, to have some history in the family of//

I: //Navy//

T: //officers, Navy, there were enough uhh applicants with that kind of background that, you know, me from the, from the little village uhh, uhh I didn't stand a chance. So the eyesight was really just an excuse//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //to, to, to cut me. And then after that I decided that I really wanted to come to the United States. So immediately I started uhh to learn English, I started to uhh to get the correspondence with my relatives here.

I: Where were your relatives//

T: //in the United States. In San Francisco, my father's uhh sister and my father's brother were in San Francisco and also another uhh sister of my father was in Manteca so I have lots of relatives uhh here. And so I started, I to orient myself in that direction. I started, I learned English very quickly cuz//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //up, up until graduation from high school I really had, you know, no, no English, no knowledge in the high school they taught us French.

I: Right.

T: Uhh which I, I, it's the language that I just uhh I, I never, I never, I never liked <laughing>

I: <laughing>

T: I, I, I never mastered six years in high school and I, I, I just barely, you know, passed my classes. Uhh but English, there was something to it that was very strange because uhh I picked up English just very quickly. Uhh I loved the language and I became actually so good that I was the professor's assistant during the last year, 1958, '59 before leaving uhh for, for, for, to come here. Uhh so I learned English, I did my applications, we had a two or three uhh false uhh false starts with, in getting the paperwork done properly and getting a visa. In fact, my, my father was just, he didn't think I was going to make it, he didn't think I was going to uhh successfully, to be successful in coming to the United States.

I: Accomplish that.

T: Accomplish that, yeah. And uhh but I, I, I really, that's what I really wanted to do.

I: How did your family or I should say your parents uhh think about you going so far away?

T: Ehh they didn't mind actually because we had relatives here. His//

I: //mmhmm//

T: //emm, his uhh sisters and brother were here and, you know, don't forget uhh all my brothers, my brothers and I, I mean, we all to some degree left the house or//

I: //from a young age//

T: //from a young age. The direction was, you know, go keep on going wherever you can find your luck or wherever you can find your education, wherever you can uhh you can improve yourself. So it wasn't uhh, it wasn't hard for them to understand or to accept and to some degree they were happy that I was, you know, moving on, moving forward.

I: That's uhh wonderful.

T: Right.

I: So you applied to schools here in the Bay Area.

T: Yes, I applied uhh, I actually started uhh at uhh USF, very short period of time, just one semester when I first came because came in February. Uhh the San Francisco State had already started their classes and I couldn't register//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //So I just going to evening school at uhh, at USF for one semester until June. And uhh and then in the fall I went to SF State, actually San Francisco State. Uhh where I spent uhh two years doing undergraduate uhh engineering prequalification work. I knew my destination, I really wanted to go to UC Berkeley, that was my, that was my objective. But uhh after about two years of lower division prerequisites at uhh SF State//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //I had to spend one semester at San Jose, go to San Jose State to get some engineering courses that UC Berkeley required before I could transfer in as a junior, which San Francisco State did not offer. So I had to go for one semester to San Jose, pick up those courses and then uhh enter UC Berkeley as a uhh, as a junior in 1962.

I: 1962

T: Right.

I: Umm how did you financially uhh support yourself?

T: Yeah, interesting uhh first of all my aunt in San Francisco provided me with a//

I: //a home//

T: //yeah, a home and you know, food and so the only, the only thing I had to worry about was my, my own pocket, my school, of course, registration, which also she paid.

I: Oh she did.

T: Yeah, she would, she provided, she was very, very generous lady//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //Uhh so but then, the first, the very first summer uhh that I was here actually I uhh I uhh went to work. I looked around and started looking around, of course, I didn't have any qualifications so I found, I found a job as a stock boy in a, in a theatre. I think the United, the United Artist Theatre//

I: //in Berkeley?//

T: //in, in San Francisco//

I: //Oh in San Francisco.

T: In San Francisco where I would be in the stock room and, and prepare orders for tickets for this or that, whatever the, the various theatres in the, in that organization uhh wanted. I would get the orders ready and, and they would come and pick 'em up and distribute them or whatever. Uhh the second, the second summer, basically I worked every summer, that's the bottom line. But the second summer uhh I kind of, I lucked out because when I was at San Francisco State a gentlemen came one Wednesday. There was a program uhh run by the foreign students' advisor's office at San Francisco State that uhh would uhh make it uh possible one, every Wednesday for the Rotary Club of San Francisco to come in and pick up one student and take him to lunch at the Rotary, uhh Rotary lunch.

I: Mmhmm.

T: So the uhh, Dr. Baker was the uhh, the advisor, the Foreign Students' Advisor. One week they called me and they said, "Would you like to go to lunch with the Rotary Club?" Of course, I didn't even know what Rotary club was at the time and I said, "Sure." So this gentleman came, picked me up, we went to a Rotary Club uhh luncheon and uhh at the end when he brought me back he gave me his card. He says uhh, "Here's my card, if you ever need anything, if I can help in any way, I'll be more than happy." And he was the District Manager of PG&E in uhh Daly City, ok?

I: <laughing>

T: So what they, what they//

I: //that a good contact <laughing>//

T: //When June, when June came, I mean I kept that card. When June came around, I said, "Gee, I, I, I do want a job but I wonder if I should ask him." So I called him up and to make the story short uhh I was hired by PG&E as an engineer, being an engineering student. Uhh were and I worked uhh for PG&E for four summers, all summers while I going to//

I: //What did you do?//

T: //to college//

I: //what did you do?//

T: //I originally, I was a uhh, like a draftsman's assistant, I would make little drawings of uhh streets or little projects or accident reports. Uhh basically just drafting, just drawing, using technical, you know, uhh drafting. And I had a little bit of skill or, you know, the uhh ability to actually to, to get the job done. And then I did, I did more and more responsible things the, the following years. But that, that helped me uhh tremendously. Uhh with, with my expenses. Particularly after I, I moved to, to when I moved to Berkeley and uhh I wasn't staying at my house anymore//

I: //yeah, yeah//

T: //the expenses were a lot higher because, even though she helped me still, I mean she paid for my registration and when I needed money uhh she was, you know, she was always there. And also my, my father's brother, my uncle, of course he was retired uhh he would just give me pocket money. I would see him, I would meet him in downtown San Francisco every, uhh once a week, either Saturday or Sunday we would go out, he would take me out to lunch and uhh he would give me some pocket money uhh.

I: {356}.

T: {356}. Ten, twenty dollars or whatever. So that's how it went.

I: Well you uhh met your wife at college didn't you?

T: Yes I met//

I: //Well tell me about that//

T: //I met my wife actually at uhh San Francisco State where we uhh, we uhh sort of had a very good, very good group. Uhh we became friends, there were about seven, eight of us, and of course every year there were new ones coming, others leaving and so forth. And uhh Angie had come the same year in 1959 and she was staying at her parents' house, she was her, her mother's sister, which was four, five blocks from my aunt's house//

I: //Well that's convenient//

T: //in the same, same neighborhood.

I: <laughing>

T: But we, we formed a group, we had a group at San Francisco State of uhh friends and uhh that, that group included {371} you know Vlassi, it included uhh Despina {373} and, and Dimitri. Dimitri came much later than, than, than we had. So anyway, that's where, that's where we met and uhh we, we didn't really become uhh a couple, let's put it this way, until uhh, until we both graduated from uhh, from college and then we became a lot, a lot closer and of course, we didn't get married until after we both had, because she got her Bachelor's at San Francisco State and then she came to Berkeley, where I was doing my uhh, finishing my undergrad, for her master's degree. Then I moved to San Jose but anyway, we uhh we waited uhh even though we were very close. Uhh we, we waited until we both graduated. I got my master's degree, I was hired by IBM, had a permanent job, she had a permanent job as a, as a Social Worker at Stanford, uhh Stanford Hospital. And uhh I mean, by then, we could see our way clear. I had changed to permanent resident, IBM uhh changed my status to permanent resident.

I: You got your alien card//

T: //So I got my, my alien card and then we got married in 1966.

I: Well that was very//

T: //So but you know, we, we waited until we had everything//

I: //in place//

T: //under control, in place before we uhh we would launch a family and getting married and, and launch a family.

I: And umm well tell me what do you, well how would you describe your assimilation here. Uhh first as a Greek coming from Greece and staying in this country. Did you decide that you were going to stay in this country, did you decided you were going to get married, were there any plans like this when you first came or did it slowly appear that maybe this is where I'm gonna stay the rest of my life. Were you thinking you were going back to Greece? I mean, what was in your mind when you were going to school and when you were looking at your future?

T: Originally just like uhh all the Greek students, the plan was that uhh I came here to get an education and then go back to Greece. That was, you know, most, all, all of us I would say uhh came with that intention. Uhh and some, and some did do exactly that. They get the education and go back to uhh, go back to Greece. Uhh in my case, I think it

was pretty clear uhh after the uhh first or second year over here I, I liked the system so much. I liked the environment, I liked the opportunities that were available here but I had, but I had pretty much uhh, it was pretty clear, I had decided that I was going to stay, I was going to stay here. Uhh//

I: //You had done your military in Greece?//

T: No, no, I was on a, I was on a student deferment//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: And uhh I, I never after all my studies and getting married and all of that I was uhh declared whatever they call it.

I: {423}

T: {423}//

I: //It's called a draft dodger.

T: Right uhh whatever.

I: <laughing>

T: Cuz after all my deferments my education deferments expired, you know, I mean I was here and I was getting married and starting a family. Uhh many years later I was able to be included in some uhh yeah, uhh included in some of the years that they allowed people to buy it off so I, I, I paid, I paid for my uhh, for whatever I owed//

I: //right//

T: //and, and got a clearance uhh so that I could go back to Greece and so I paid my obligation basically, which was legally done.

I: Oh yeah, yeah.

T: So I never served.

I: But did you look at yourself as a Greek in an American space, did you look at yourself well, I'm also American, or I could be American, or I'm talkin' about your emotional and psychological and intellectual sides.

T: I think there, there are, there are classified in, in, in three periods uhh. When I first came, when I was going to school, uhh up until I got married and all of that I was more attached to the Greek community. I was 100% attached to the, to the Greek community. As a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, I attribute uhh uhh I attribute my, the

opportunity to develop so to speak uhh leadership skills or actually to become comfortable in, in leadership roles. It was right there in the, in the Greek community. Uhh when I, when I first came, a couple years later, a year later or something, uhh the environment that my aunt was uhh was her friends and you know, the groups that she was associatin' with was the Arcadians. The uhh organization of the uhh Arcadians in San Francisco. There were some pretty powerful people in there and uhh they took me in right away. <laughing> {463} become a member of the Arcadians in San Francisco. And lo' and behold by uhh within a couple years 1964 I, they made me President of the uhh, of the Arcadian Organization.

I: <laughing>

T: Which to me, I mean, it was//

I: //you were pretty young then//

T: //I was pretty young and I never had any uhh leadership uhh role or anything like that being given to me before. And uhh I still to this day, I uhh I credit the uhh the Arcadians in San Francisco for, for actually helping me to uhh to bring out uhh some hidden or laden//

I: //abilities//

T: //abilities which I didn't even know I had.

I: Mhmm.

T: And it was done in such a way, in a cooperative, in a, in a friendly, like a family, family-style//

I: //Yes//

T: //uhh that actually gave me the impetus, gave me the, the courage to say, "Hey, I can do this. You know, I can, I can be president I can, I can learn the skills of running a meeting." Which I had no idea, I mean, uhh I had no uhh and, and uhh that led to uhh also me becoming comfortable uhh in getting involved in the profession association, the {487} the Electrical and Electronics Engineers//

I: //is this//

T: //after I graduated and uhh I became very active in the professional organization of, of {490} uhh very quickly I became, you know, secretary, treasurer, secretary and then before I knew it uhh this was in '68, uhh '69, I was President of the local chapter in, in Silicon Valley of the uhh, of the Institute of Electrical Engineers and Electronics. So and again, let build up my confidence or my, my uhh uhh brought out my leadership uhh

skills but if I hadn't gone through the Arcadians' first I mean, I, I, I, I ran a convention, the Pan-Arcadian Convention//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //in San Francisco in, in 19-, like in 1966//

I: //Mmhmm//

T: //Which was pretty young and uhh and so those were the steps that actually helped me to develop and, and, and convince myself that I was capable of doing these kind of things and I enjoyed doing uhh public service and, and, and leadership uhh positions.

I: So you, it was something that was very conducive to your//

T: //right//

I: //abilities and personality//

T: //so, so and, yeah, yeah, but I, but I didn't, I had no idea.

I: You didn't, yeah.

T: I had no idea, I mean I and I did not have opportunities to actually develop those skills or those laden characteristics uhh while, while I was in Greece or my early years here. So going back to your original question//

I: //that's//

T: //those, the original years I was very close to the Greek community//

I: //and your Greek identity//

T: //and my Greek identity. Once uhh we got married we had our first child, we had Ari in 1967, then I realized that I have to uhh, then my focus changed. It changed from the Greek community to family and the professional activities. So I kinda distanced myself for many years from the Greek community because no I had a child, I had a son, uhh it uhh and then the family requirements were, plus I was then climbing the, you know, the ladder of professional, uhh activities.

I: And//

T: //so that's the second, the second, uhh the second section which then led to my getting involved in local politics, being on the planning commission, being on the city council of Los Altos for, for eight years. Uhh so that was, that was the period that I was more an American, in the American community. Ok uhh following uhh my civic

activities along the long extended civic activities in Los Altos in the county and, and we'll talk about the uhh//

END OF SIDE A {546}

SIDE B {000}

T: '96, '97 uhh I actually turned again towards the Greek community. This is the third, the third major chapter, if I would say. And uhh I've been doing a lot of volunteering work in the Greek community. I head up the uhh the United Hellenic Societies. I'm uhh Vice President of {003}, I'm Vice President of Dynamis, so most of my activities in the third chapter uhh are, are back in the Greek community.

I: Umm I wanted to back up for a moment. You were working for Hewlett-Packard.

T: Yes.

I: Ehh quite a pioneer in Silicon Valley.

T: Right.

I: And umm you were there for how many years exactly?

T: Twenty years.

I: Twenty years. And so when you went for the state assembly, you decided to say goodbye to Hewlett-Packard and go off on your own, is that, how did that//

T: //yeah//

I: //reason happen.

T: Yeah, let me uhh, let me back up a little bit. I was uhh coming close 1995 uhh was my last term on the city council of Los Altos, I had served as major in 1991, '92. So my second four term was up in 1995. Uhh Mr. Packard, whom I was working very closely with uhh at, at HP Laboratories, I was Director of Emerging Technologies and we had a lot of contact uhh through him, with his, with his office. Uhh since a lot of inventions and things were coming to Mr. Packard all the time, he would call me in to discuss these kind of things. Anyway uhh he calls me in one day and he says uhh, "I understand you're finishing with Los Altos uhh City Council." And I said, "Yep." And he says, "Would you consider running for state assembly?" Uhh I said, "Well I mean I have a career," I, I, I, I said uhh, "I hope that doesn't uhh, I hope that's not a uhh, that's, that's, that's not a signal or something." "Oh no, no, no, no," he says. But uhh, you know, he says, "We have 80 assemblymen and 40 state senators in Sacramento, 120 legislators and not one of them knows anything about technology." And yet, he says, "Technology is the driving engine of uhh for California. And here you are, you uhh,

you're at the top of the uhh of the technology uhh knowledge and area and you also have served for eight years as a local, in local government here, as a volunteer of course. As mayor and the city council and transportation commission and many planning commissions, and so forth." He says, "You know the region, you know the issues," uhh and he says, "You, you have a very rare combination," he says, "of both knowledge of uhh civic issues and technology." And he says, "I think you would be a, you would make an excellent uhh assemblyman." So I, I said, "Let me think about that." I thought about it for a few days and I went back and I said, "To heck with it, yeah I'll do it! I've been an engineer for thirty years, uhh I like being with people, I like public service, uhh why not? I'll, I'll, I'll go for it." And of course, of course, he supported me, he was my main, he wrote the first, the first check for \$10,000.

I: Oh wow.

T: For my, <laughing> for my, for my campaign. And uhh of course it was unfortunate because uhh in March 1966, no 1996 uhh the day of the primary, the day of the primary, he died. Uhh Mr. Packer died, of course, doesn't mean that, I'm not, I'm not saying that I didn't get elected because he died, but his son, David Woodley, uhh would not continue the support. He says, you know, "Politics was my father's uhh thing, I don't get involved with politics," and so forth. So anyway, uhh I was not elected, the election was in uhh November uhh 1996. Uhh which was, which was sort of, which was not a total surprise uhh because I was, I was running as the Republican. I, I, I got the Republican uhh nomination in, in March of 1996 so I was running against the Democrat uhh by the name of Ted {043} who had been in the assembly before, had a tremendous uhh recognition uhh {045} recognition. Two thirds of the district were in San Mateo County where he was currently serving as a sitting member of the Board of Supervisors. I was in Santa Clara County which was only one-third of the district and the district was uhh like uhh forty eight percent Democratic, uhh thirty-six percent Republican. So uhh but still I didn't get elected but I got 55,000 votes, he got 75,000 I thought I, I think I did pretty good, I was, I was proud of myself and uhh//

I: //Maybe if you had run for a Democrat you might be <laughing>//

T: <laughing>

I: You're the first Republican I ever voted for!//

T: //I know, I know.

I: <laughing> Ok.

T: Yeah that uhh yeah//

I: //{052}//

T: //and that, right, right. And then uhh afterwards I decided I didn't want to run uhh for office again, I, I gave up politics because I decided I had a lot of other things to enjoy in, in, in life by then. Uhh our first granddaughter was uhh//

I: //Yeah//

T: //was, was uhh had been born and uhh you know, we both like to travel a lot and enjoy, enjoy life and so I did not pursue uhh trying to get elected again.

I: So bring me to your, uhh as far as your children are concerned and your family.

T: Yes.

I: This is a very interesting part of the community uhh raising children//

T: //Right.

I: With their Hellenic heritage and align them also to be, have their American identity because that's really what they are.

T: Right.

I: Umm that's always a area, it can be an area of conflict. So, of course, the, the good point is that you and Angie are both Greek, Greek-born, you speak Greek as your first language. How did, how did the whole uhh heritage, you know, the child says many times, "I come home I'm in Greece, I go out I'm in the United States."

T: Sure.

I: How did that get handled in your family or//

T: //We//

I: //stuff like that.

T: Right, we very much, you know, tried and gave our children the Greek heritage. Uhh as much as, as we could at home all the time. However, uhh of course, the Greek church uhh the early years in, in Greek school, in Sunday school and all of those things. However, when the kids became teenager age, starting with uhh with Ari, uhh we recognized some, some conflict, not conflicts but you know, fine conflicts. We can, we can call them conflicts or some choices that, that, that, that had to be, that had to be made. Uhh we had uhh little league baseball that Ari was involved in and AYSO the soccer thing that I was helping teaching and all of that. And uhh we had become, by then we had become also uhh we'd been hooked to skiing. <laughing> And which happened just incidentally. Eh so we, we have a, we weren't a dilemma. A number of, a number of times, now the kids, the, the children was, Ari and Tony being teenagers. At least, Ari

being teenager, Tony being like you know, eight, eight, nine years old. And uhh we made an overt choice uhh very clearly uhh we, we decided that it was more important for our children to participate in the activities that their friends, their, their schoolmates, the people around them were engaged more so than to put uhh higher priority on the Greek heritage, the Greek language, the Greek uhh religion, Sunday school and all of those things. So we overtly chose to give our children more, to expose our children more to the, to their community, to the, to the American community. And uhh in contrast with some of our other Greek, Greek friends, we did not pressure there. We did not take them to uhh to church every Sunday and to Greek school and to uhh uhh and to Sunday school and all of those things. Instead, you know, we just uhh, everybody jumped in the car on Friday uhh Friday afternoon and go up to Tahoe and go skiing during the ski weekends. <laughing> or, or since I was coaching the AYSO, the soccer teams of the boys, I mean we had, we had games. Uhh we had soccer games or little league games uhh every, every Saturday and this was the day when they were younger we would take 'em to Greek school in, in San Jose.

I: Yeah.

T: So there were no time, I mean, you could, you couldn't, you couldn't do both//

I: //Sure, yeah//

T: Yeah, you either gonna do little league and AYSO or you were gonna do uhh Greek school on Saturdays. So we decided to uhh give 'em that direction and it was more important for them to be involved in sports and uhh and those and those sorts of things. And I figured also that uhh and I had seen some of our friends that were a little older than than than ours that pressured their kids to be in the Greek community. Every opportunity, every happening, every event, every and what I had noticed is some of those kids, the minute they went to college or the minute they grew up they just fled. I mean away from the Greek community because there had been too much pressure. And I figure, I thought hey, if they want, if my kids want to learn the Greek language, if they want to get close to the church, it's going to have to be their choice, not, not by forcing them to, to do that. So I'm happy to, to, to report that I, even though they did not marry, marry Greek girls, which is, you can expect, if they're not that close to the Greek community//

I: //right, why would they?

T: Yeah, I mean uhh, they're gonna, they're gonna choose, they're going to uhh find people from the environment they're in.

I: Mmhmm.

T: But very happy that our son, Ari, uhh married a, a non-Greek. But Kristy actually uhh went to catechism uhh, went through the full cycle, became an Orthodox, got

baptized and uhh today they take the three, the three granddaughters, their, their kids ehh to church, a lot more religiously than we, than we ever did.

I: So they chose.

T: They chose. Uhh and, and this was exactly what I had hoped for. That uhh it's their choice. They do it because, because they want to do it. And I think that's uhh, I was very grati-, I'm very gratified to see that it happened that way. Uhh Tony is not married yet but uhh we'll, we'll see what happens//

I: //We'll see what happens.

T: Right, right.

I: <laughing> Umm well you're Greek heritage, I'm sure has played a huge role in not only your identity but in your success as a human being, meaning as a father, as a businessman, as a husband. Umm what, is there any particular about, of your values that you have given your children that you would like to give to your grandchildren, umm considering especially since your children decided to become, raise their kids more like Greeks or have some uhh instillment of the values of the, the Greek heritage. I guess my question is more uhh what part of your Greek heritage do you think has accomplished all these things? A successful person in an American uhh life, an American place?

T: I think probably uhh both, both Angie and I wanted to give our children the freedom uhh to uhh to choose their, their future, uhh so to speak to, to, to, to a certain degree. But knowing that we were always behind them, we'll always be behind them, but it, in, in, in, of course having brought them up with a uhh with the proper principles uhh we thought we'd give 'em the, the freedom to, to choose what they wanna do and, and find their own success, uhh so to speak. Uhh now that's not, that's not typical in, in, in Greek heh in Greek parenting uhh. It's, it's not typical uhh but I think, I think the family, the family values that they saw around both of my family and Angie's family, growing up visiting Greece, umm doing the things we did as a family in our house, I think it gave them the right tools, gave them the, the, the right thinking uhh thinking process. And, and, and the values that uhh that they have to apply by themselves.

I: Very, very nice. Well thank you very much for your time. It was a pleasure to talk with you and to hear your wonderful stories and uhh if there's anything else you wanted to//

T: //Yeah I just wanna make one, one closing uhh closing statement, one closing thought that I think that, that my generation, our generation, those of us who came from Greece as students, immigrants, or students become umm immigrants was a very unique uhh very unique generation that I don't think will ever be repeated in, in history. And, and I'm saying unique for the following reason: we spent a huge, huge distance umm <loud noise> from being umm, from being born uhh poor or with very few opportunities uhh in a, in a, in a poor country like uhh Greece to making just a huge transition in

coming over here, becoming professionals. I mean, who would have, who would have thought that I, a little boy that was born in, in a primitive house on the side of a mountain in, in Greece would actually have the opportunity to rise professionally, to be the Director of uhh New Technologies at one of the world's most uhh most admired institution, that's uhh Hewlett-Packard uhh Laboratories professionally or, at the same time, to rise and become the mayor of a, of a city like Los Altos which is a uhh, you know, which is a, a respectable, very highly uhh educated uhh community. Uhh I mean I just marvel at, at the distance we traveled as far as, uhh as far as uhh, what we started, where we were born and what we ended up achieving in our lives. And I'm not talking about myself only, there were many, many other people in the same categories, your husband included, your husband included. And I, I don't think that uhh our children will ever have that opportunity because or, or, or//

I: //I agree with that//

T: //yeah, generations, current generations of children, even, even children being born in Greece today. I mean they are almost, as the standards is almost the same as, as here. So uhh this, this great elevation, this great distance of being, being born in a very, a very poor with very uhh it's so far away from where we are today. I, I think, I think our generation is, is, this gap it's just unique. I don't think there will be another because the world has, has changed where the world is a lot closer now together. Most countries, there are very few third, third world countries but particularly in speaking about, about Greece uhh I don't think, I don't think it can be done anymore. Uhh you know, even, even the children of uhh our relatives or immigrants who were born in this country, they were born in opportunity and they didn't have to climb as much as, as we did. So I think this is a, this is uhh evidence and, and actually uhh a tribute to our generation who came from Greece that actually was able to make that, that huge climb from uhh one social and educational level to a, a, a huge difference. So umm I feel privileged that, you know, that I, that I, that happened, that I happened to be born and be uhh in, in, and conduct the majority of my life in this, in this unusual time frame and those unusual times.

I: Well, that's very nice. Thank you very much, Ted.

T: Thank you.

END OF SIDE B {188}

END OF INTERVIEW

Notes:

{008}: Place of birth

{039}: Greek word

{049}: Greek word

{093}: Greek name

{094}: Small village name

{101}: Village
{118}: Greek word
{140}: Greek words
{194}: Greek word
{206}: Greek word
{209}: Greek word
{226}: Greek word
{235}: Greek word
{356}: Greek word
{372}: Greek names
{373}: Greek names
{423}: Greek names
{487}: Greek names

SIDE B

{003}: Greek names
{043}: Name of Democrat opponent